

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image processing apparatus which acquires code data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium recording hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of  
5 images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the apparatus comprising:

an input interface which received signals from an external recording medium;

an input controller which acquires the code data by  
10 said input interface first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images;

a decoder which decodes the code data acquired by said input controller; and

15 a storage device which stores data decoded by said decoder.

2. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

20 3. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said input controller acquires the code data first only at a plurality of levels including the lowest level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images.

25 4. The image processing apparatus according to claim

1, further comprising a print engine which prints an image based on data decoded by said decoder.

5. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

5 an index maker which makes an index image on the plurality of images based on the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

a print engine which prints the index image received from said index maker;

10 an operational device which instructs to make an index to said index maker; and

a controller which allows to activate said index maker when instructed by said operational device after data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

15 6. The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said image input controller continues to receive data at higher levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding for each of the plurality of images, after the data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

20 7. The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising a display device which displays a state of data acquisition of the code data divided by levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding.

25

8. The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising a print engine which prints the index image received from said index make.

9. An image processing method for acquiring code data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium which records hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the method comprising the steps of:

acquiring the code data first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images; and

decoding the code data acquired from the external recording medium.

10. The image processing method according to claim 9, wherein the low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

11. The image processing method according to claim 9, wherein the code data is acquired first only at a plurality of levels including the lowest level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images.

12. The image processing method according to claim 9, further comprising:

making an index image on the plurality of images based on the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical

encoding on the plurality of images;

receiving an instruction by a user to make an index;  
and

activating the step of making the index image when  
5 instructed by the user after data acquisition of the data  
at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is  
completed.

13. The image processing method according to claim 12,  
further comprising the step of acquiring data at high level  
10 of the unit of hierarchical encoding for each of the  
plurality of images, after the data acquisition of the data  
at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is  
completed.

14. The image processing method according to claim 12,  
15 further comprising the step of displaying a state of data  
acquisition of the code data divided by levels of the unit  
of hierarchical encoding.

15. A computer readable recording medium which records an  
image processing program for acquiring code data of a  
20 plurality of images from an external recording medium which  
records hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of  
images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the program  
comprising the steps of:

acquiring the code data first only at a low level of  
25 the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external

recording medium over the plurality of images; and

decoding the code data acquired from the external recording medium.

16. The computer readable recording medium according to  
5 claim 15, wherein the low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

~~17. The computer readable recording medium according to~~  
claim 15, wherein the code data is acquired first only at a plurality of levels including the lowest level of the unit  
10 of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images.

18. The computer readable recording medium according to claim 15, the program further comprising the steps of:

making an index image on the plurality of images based  
15 on the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

receiving an instruction by a user to make an index;  
and

activating the step of making the index image when  
20 instructed by the user after data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

19. The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of  
25 acquiring data at high level of the unit of hierarchical

encoding for each of the plurality of images, after the data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

21. The computer readable recording medium according to  
5 claim 18, the program further comprising the step of displaying that an image can be printed after data at the high level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is acquired for the image, and of outputting the image based on the data acquired on the image when instructed by a user.

10 21. The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of displaying a state of data acquisition of the code data divided by levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding.